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City schools will sublease land for new school

\$30.8 million middle school to be built by 2018

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During its regular Tuesday meeting, the Tuscaloosa City Council unanimously approved a resolution that designated the Tuscaloosa City Board of Education, along with PARA, as a sublessee of 36 acres of property as the site of a new school near Northridge High School.



The construction of a new middle school near Northridge High moved one step closer Tuesday as the city named the city board of education as a designee to sublease property where the school will be built.

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The new “north middle school,” will be part of the Northridge High feeder system, which will include Verner Elementary, Rock Quarry Middle and Alberta Elementary. The new school is part of the system’s integrated curriculum facilities analysis demographic strategic plan, which implements several changes throughout the school system such as pay raises, capital improvements and zoning changes.

“This is part of several steps that we are going to have to take to move forward and our projects are on time and on schedule,” said Lee Garrison, school board president.

In December 2012, Gov. Robert Bentley negotiated a deal with the Alabama Department of Mental Health, the Tuscaloosa County Park and Recreation Authority and Ol’ Colony Golf Complex for the land, which is valued at \$3.6 million.

“It was designed by an agreement with the governor that it would be used for school purposes if it was leased by the city or its designee,” said Glenda Webb, Tuscaloosa city attorney. “By the lease, either we have to use it or the city’s designee will use it, but it can only be used for this.”

The unnamed school, which will be completed by 2018 at an estimated cost of \$30.8 million, is part of a plan to accommodate a growing number of students in the district.

The school will be built to accommodate nearly 900 students, making it the city’s largest middle school, although District 3 school board member Norman Crow said there would likely be between 600 and 700 students in the school the first year or so.

“I think it’s a very good first step because the board has determined we need a new school and this is what we need,” he said.

As part of the strategic plan and new middle school, Rock Quarry Middle will become Rock Quarry Elementary once the new school is completed.

Webb said that ideally, the school board would likely request that the state deed the property to the board of education instead of having it under a lease agreement.

“Until that it is done, they will construct that on a leased property,” Webb said.

Crow said the board would likely discuss the next step of the project during the next school board meeting, which will be March 1.

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